



Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Ella Risk Elementary School

CENTRAL FALLS

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

December 10, 2004



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Ella Risk Elementary School from December 6 -10, 2004.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

How well do students learn at Ella Risk Elementary School?

How well does the teaching at Ella Risk Elementary School affect learning?

How well does Ella Risk Elementary School support learning and teaching?

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Ella Risk Elementary School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

Team members spent a total of over 91 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Additionally, team members spent a total of over 35.5 hours discussing the school with faculty, staff, and school and district administrators.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 32 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Ella Risk Elementary School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Central Falls School District School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Central Falls School District, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Ella Risk Elementary School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF ELLA RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ella Risk Elementary School opened its doors to students in September 1999. This new structure was built on the site of the former century-old school. During construction, Ella Risk faculty and students were housed at a former parochial school in the city. Ella Risk serves students in grades 1–5 and is part of the Central Falls School District located in Central Falls, Rhode Island. The school is named in honor of a former teacher and principal who served the students of this community for fifty years.

Four hundred and eighty six students attend the Ella Risk School, and they are a diverse group. Sixty-seven percent are Hispanic, 21% are white, and 12% are African-American. Thirty-two percent of the students receive English as a second language services (ESL); 111 are taught in ESL classrooms; and the others are monitored for ESL services in general education classrooms. Eleven percent of students are serviced in special education classrooms, and an additional 11% receive special education resource services. Ninety-four percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Ella Risk School is led by a building principal. Twenty-six general education, special education and ESL classroom teachers serve the students of Ella Risk. They are supported by full-time special subject teachers in art, music, library/media, physical education and health. Two full-time Title I teachers provide language arts instruction. Two resource teachers service students in both the classroom and small group instruction. The other full-time staff includes a speech pathologist, a nurse and a home-school liaison. The part-time staff includes a bilingual speech pathologist, a guidance counselor, a social worker, an occupational therapist and adaptive physical education teachers. The support staff at Ella Risk includes one full-time and one part-time secretary, six special education teacher assistants, six lunch aides, three custodians, four cafeteria workers, three crossing guards, and three personal care attendants, as required by Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Several programs and initiatives are currently underway at Ella Risk to support the needs of the students and the work of the faculty. One fourth grade and one fifth grade classroom follow an inclusion model for special education services. Several after school programs are available to students, including a homework club, a science-math club, SMILE, and an arts program, TALL. Teachers at Ella Risk follow a balanced literacy approach to reading instruction informed by their previous work with the Success for All program. Teachers use the Empowering Writers program for writing instruction and the Investigations program for mathematics.

3. PORTRAIT OF ELLA RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

Ella Risk School is warm, friendly and cheerful. Its doors open to bright, well-designed classrooms and clean and orderly halls. Smiles are abundant everywhere you look, and there is an excitement for learning throughout the school. This school welcomes all children and their families as integral parts of the Ella Risk community.

The principal at Ella Risk sets the tone for the atmosphere of learning, and she guides the education. She is welcoming and respectful, and she encourages each to be at his or her best. Recognizing the important role she plays in educational leadership, she strives to balance professional freedom with data-driven instruction.

The faculty at Ella Risk care greatly about their students. Teachers work hard to create routines and procedures that will support and guide the learning of their students. They also try new ideas and work together to develop their teaching, share their ideas and improve the curriculum. The absence of consistent, explicit and effective school-wide instruction, as well as high expectations for all, limits student learning and achievement.

Great gains have been made at Ella Risk in some areas of learning. Student scores have risen dramatically on the state assessments in writing effectiveness, and students show progress in the areas of mathematics and problems solving. However, the many challenges that remain cannot be ignored. Insufficient training in some areas of the curriculum, inconsistent expectations, limited available professional development, the absence of a standard curriculum for science and social studies, and an unmet demand for additional after school programs remain to be addressed.

Additionally, the highly restrictive options for the delivery of services to special needs and English as a second language students do not effectively serve the needs of these students. These students have limited opportunities to learn and interact with their peers and to experience the same learning opportunities that all the other students do. Due in part to these restrictions, learning achievement for these students lags behind their peers.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

Students at Ella Risk School say they enjoy reading at school and at home. They say that reading is fun and makes them smarter. Some students understand what they read and can explain it to others. These students read accurately and fluently, and they comprehend well. They know they can read effectively by utilizing the strategies they have learned. They enjoy taking Accelerated Reading tests and selecting their own books from both classroom and school libraries. Other students currently do not read at their appropriate grade levels but are making progress in their reading. They are developing the strategies of effective readers, but they have difficulty overcoming language barriers and deficits in their basic phonics skills such as recognizing words and comprehending text. Still other students do not know the strategies that will help them learn to read for basic understanding or to understand text at a more advanced level, or they are unable to use these strategies. These students struggle to decode print, to use strategies such as sound it out to break words into smaller words and to skip ahead. These students do not consistently know what strategies to use to read well and/or when to apply them. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Many children at Ella Risk write well, and most are enthusiastic and excited about writing. Students practice their writing across the curriculum and at home. Student enthusiasm and practice in writing has contributed to considerable gains in writing effectiveness. Between the 2002 and 2004 New Standards Reference Examinations, the number of students who met or exceeded the standard on the writing effectiveness subtest rose from 28% to 71%. Students who are good writers use a variety of rich words and dialogue in their writing, know how to use sentence starters, and self and peer-edit their work in ways that improve what they write. They know how to use dictionaries, class resources and charts to develop their writing. Other students struggle to write well. Some of these have difficulty keeping their writing focused and organized. Other issues that are problems for them are starting a written piece, demonstrating proper word use, using the correct conventions and consistently applying the writing skills they have learned in class. Still other students have difficulty expressing in writing what they can verbalize. These latter students need assistance or prompting to write at all. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school administrator, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, school improvement plan)*

Students at Ella Risk use math concepts and skills and apply them with varying degrees of success to problem solve. Students who are successful problem-solvers know and can use strategies such as making predictions, determining patterns to develop solutions, and constructing and using arrays. They effectively write number sentences, draw pictures, explain their answers and record their work in math journals. These students can transfer these strategies into areas throughout the curriculum, for example, to attach cylinders to a base in art, to compare the size of geographic regions in social studies, and to determine the number of servings of cake in response to literature. Other students, however, need prompting and direction to solve problems. They cannot apply the strategies they have learned, build upon them or transfer their knowledge to new situations. These students have difficulty problem solving independently, because they do not understand basic concepts such as what the characteristics of geometric figures are, when to add or subtract or how to determine patterns in their work. Students still struggle to do math and problem solve effectively, even though they have made substantial gains over the last three years in all mathematics subtests of the state assessments. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan, 2002 - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, district strategic plan, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, and parents)*

Teachers, administrators and staff all say that students are the strength of Ella Risk School. They are friendly and enthusiastic learners who are eager to learn and do their personal best. They respect their teachers and the school and recognize the importance of learning. They say school makes them smarter and prepares them for their futures. Students are responsible for their learning, plan when they will complete their homework, and transition well between their learning activities and changing classrooms. These students know what is expected of them and respond to those expectations. Students also behave appropriately at Ella Risk, and they know the consequences of their behaviors. They enter the school, walk the halls, play respectfully on the playground and follow the school rules. Students throughout the school help one another and are kind to one another. Students say that the routines and structures of the classrooms and the school such as the morning meetings and the color chart help them achieve and succeed. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, district strategic plan, 2004 Information Works!, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities, school and district report cards)*

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

- ◆ *Students are enthusiastic learners and value education.*
- ◆ *Students enjoy reading and writing.*
- ◆ *Students have made considerable gains in several areas of the state assessments.*
- ◆ *Students benefit from their classroom and school routines and from the resources they offer.*
- ◆ *Successful students effectively use and apply strategies.*
- ◆ *Some students have difficulty using and applying skills and strategies.*
- ◆ *Some students struggle to work independently.*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Some teachers at Ella Risk effectively teach students to read. These teachers teach their students a variety of strategies and skills such as visualization, making connections, predicting, and locating supportive details in text. They foster student interest and enthusiasm in reading. They explicitly teach their students to decode words and develop their vocabularies. These teachers also use the Core Literature program to teach students critical thinking skills, develop their listening comprehension and expose them to various genres and levels of texts. Other teachers, however, are not as successful in teaching their students to read. These teachers do not match their instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. Some of these teachers over-rely on worksheet packets, whole-group instruction and factual recall. Still others employ effective practices such as reading response journals, flexible reading groups and explicit instruction in word decoding and analysis; however, they do not always use them in ways that help their students read well. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan, district strategic plan, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Information Works!, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities)*

Writing instruction is a priority at Ella Risk. Most teachers successfully teach their students to write well by using school-wide writing programs and practices consistently to support students to become good writers. Teachers also require their students to write in all curriculum areas. These teachers teach their students to brainstorm, organize and develop their ideas into effective paragraphs and to use rich vocabulary when they write. They also teach their students how to improve their writing through conferencing, peer and self-editing, and the use of rubrics. Teachers effectively use student work as teaching tools to help students identify aspects of quality writing. Teachers celebrate student writing by having their students publish and share their work. These teachers provide many readily accessible visual aids and charts, classroom resources, and writing and editing tools to help their students write better. Writing effectiveness scores on the New Standards Reference Examination have risen dramatically; however, scores in the area of writing conventions are much lower and are stagnant at 37% who have met or exceeded the standard. While teachers have targeted writing effectiveness in their instruction, they have focused less on grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, school improvement plan, district strategic plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, records of professional development activities, district and school policies and practices)*

Some teachers effectively teach students to problem solve by providing challenging scenarios and opportunities for them to use strategies and develop their own solutions. Students in these classes use manipulatives, identify patterns, explore math concepts with number of the day and share multiple solutions. Many teachers, however, rely on routine problems to teach their students problem solving. These teachers regularly structure problem solving activities that do not allow or encourage students to choose their own strategies or to explore, develop and justify their answers independently. These teachers do not teach or encourage students to explore multiple solutions to problems or provide students with opportunities to struggle with their work. While teachers do provide students opportunities to solve problems in math, language arts, health and science, these opportunities are limited and do not allow students sufficient practice to become competent problem solvers. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with school and district administrators and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, district strategic plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, records of professional development activities, district and school policies and practices)*

Teachers at Ella Risk recognize the importance of collaboration to improve teaching for learning. Teachers say that they greatly benefit from the time they spend learning and sharing during their voluntary grade level meetings. Teachers respect one another's expertise. They share their expertise with their colleagues to provide professional development in the areas of statewide Grade-level Expectations, science and literacy integration, and the LIPS program. Teachers recognize the need for additional professional development to improve their ability to help all students achieve. They report that they need further training in the use of technology and inclusion, as well as in increasing the involvement of families in the school. While there is limited professional development available to teachers, some report that not everyone recognizes the importance of such training and, thus, does not participate sufficiently in what is available. Other teachers say that there is a need for more training for all teachers. Additionally, professional development in new programs does not always accommodate the needs of general, special and ESL teachers, and all professional development is not provided in a systematic and on-going manner. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students, teachers, school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, district strategic plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities)*

Teachers have consistent and school-wide routines and procedures to help students behave and to prepare them for learning in school. Teachers and staff communicate effectively with one another and work hard to instill these routines explicitly in their students. All staff, including support staff and custodians, participate in the color change behavior system that makes appropriate and safe behavior consistent throughout the school. Teachers help their students by beginning their classes with morning meetings in which they remind students of expectations and set the tone for the day. They help students organize their work through the use of homework and writing and reading folders. Teachers also teach students to transition effectively between their classroom activities, as well as during dismissal and arrival. Despite these efforts, a culture of high academic expectations for all students does not exist. Teachers throughout the school do not effectively differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of all learners within the same classroom. Many teachers do not believe all of their students can do challenging and hard work. Some teachers label students by their reading abilities and use these labels to refer to them within the class. Very few students in special populations are integrated with their grade level peers in academic and itinerant classes. These practices limit the ability of all students to learn and achieve to their maximum potential. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, 2003 Information Works!, district and school policies and practices,)*

Commendations for Ella Risk Elementary School

Dedicated and hard-working teachers

Teachers who foster an enthusiasm and interest in reading

Making writing instruction a priority

Consistent writing instruction throughout the school

School-wide Core Literature program

School-wide routines

Teacher collaboration and sharing of practices

School-wide behavior plan

Substantial gains in state assessment scores

Recommendations for Ella Risk Elementary School

Match reading instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Examine flexible grouping practices for reading, and regroup students more frequently based on appropriate assessments results.

Continue to prioritize writing instruction in all curriculum areas.

Continue to use the Core Literature program to develop students' critical thinking skills.

Increase the focus on instruction in grammar, punctuation, spelling and word usage.

Provide non-routine and challenging problems to all students.

Encourage students to develop multiple solutions, and provide additional opportunities for students to problem solve across the curriculum.

Participate in additional professional development to improve the ability to help all students achieve.

Continue consistent school wide routines and procedures to help students learn and behave appropriately.

Continue to share your expertise, and find additional opportunities to expand this practice.

Create a culture of high academic expectations for all students.

Provide more opportunities for students in special populations to learn and interact with their grade level peers.

Recommendations for Central Falls School Department

Provide additional funds and opportunities for professional development, including job-embedded professional development.

Provide teachers with training and support to differentiate their instruction and to help them challenge all students.

Encourage and support teachers to increase the level of inclusion of special populations.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

There are several effective and innovative programs at Ella Risk such as Empowering Writers, Math Investigations, LIPS and Core Literature. The Empowering Writers Program is consistently used throughout the school to provide students with clear and explicit guidelines for what makes a writing piece effective and powerful. The Core Literature program exposes students to a wide range of genres and allows them to engage in higher level thinking. The school does not have a curriculum in any subject area and, therefore, many of these programs have become the core curriculum rather than a resource for teachers. Teachers do not have the essential scope and sequence to guide their instruction and help them do their work. Further, while there are programs in place for writing, math and literature, there are no curriculum programs for science and social studies. Teachers are forced to create their own curriculum in these subjects. This produces inconsistency and gaps not only in instruction, but in student achievement as well. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with students teachers and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, district strategic plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, classroom assessments, classroom textbooks, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities)*

The Ella Risk School provides instruction in a variety of ways and in multiple settings to students who have diverse learning needs. School and district administrators report that inclusion is encouraged; however, there are no district policies or practices for special population of students to be educated within the least restrictive environment or in the neighborhood school. In a few instances there is successful co-teaching by the classroom teacher and the service provider in the general education classroom. All students in these classrooms benefit from the additional teaching support for learning. In self-contained special needs and ESL classrooms, teachers work hard to determine the needs of their students and then, identify and obtain the critical resources and use the best instructional practices. However, the extensive labeling of classrooms and students, as well as placing students in segregated and isolated settings away from their grade level peers, does not support their academic, social or emotional growth. Additionally, these teachers are expected to use the programs and materials of the general education programs, but they have not received professional development to differentiate and modify their instruction to allow all students to attain their maximum success. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing district strategic plan, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, school and district report cards, records of professional development activities, district and school policies and practices)*

The climate at Ella Risk School is warm, friendly and welcoming. The principal embodies and communicates the vision of this school, and she is at the heart of its nurturing, learning environment. Student achievement is the driving force behind her decisions. She sets a framework for the school that encourages all to use their individual strengths and creativity. The teachers are dedicated and hardworking. They constantly strive to improve student achievement. They use their unassigned time to collaborate and plan with their grade level colleagues. They form positive relationships with their students, and this is a priority in this school. Support staff are encouraged and willing to problem solve situations that will improve the climate of the school such as serving as translators and filling in where they are needed. Students are friendly, polite and respectful of their peers, as well as of the adults in the school. The students contribute to the positive climate throughout the school. The school recognizes parents as equal partners and values their support and involvement. However, the parents have several concerns that are not being met. In addition to the positions that are currently available to them on the School Improvement Team, they want a voice in the school through involvement in an active parent group. Many parents say that they would like more frequent communication that updates them about their children's progress. Parents and children express the need for additional after school programs, particularly for those in the primary grades. Parents also want support that will help them help their children complete their homework assignments. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, district strategic plan, district and school policies and practices)*

Professional development opportunities at Ella Risk School are made available by the district, the school and the teachers. However, for a variety of reasons the professional development that is available is insufficient to meet the needs of this school. The Professional Development Academy is an option for training, but it is outside of the school day; it is voluntary; and it is not regularly attended. The district also provides professional development days; however, there does not appear to be a strategic plan or vision for professional learning. Professional development is provided when new programs or initiatives are introduced, but proactive, ongoing and systematic training does not occur. District and school administrators say that the use and availability of time during the school day for teacher professional development, as well as instructional time for students, is not ideal. The most frequently occurring professional development happens voluntarily at the grade level meetings. Notably, this takes place during contractually unassigned time. Teachers and students benefit from this effective use of planning time in which teachers work with district coaches, look at student work and share their areas of expertise. The principal is innovative, and she works to provide ongoing support and resources for teacher learning, despite the limitations in funds. Teachers recognize the need for further support and training in areas such as differentiated instruction to challenge all students, inclusive education and effective reading practices. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, school and district administrators, talking with teachers, school administrators, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, district strategic plan, school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, classroom textbooks, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, 2004 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results, district and school policies and practices, records of professional development activities, school and district report cards)*

Commendations for Ella Risk Elementary School

Effective and innovative programs
A visionary and supportive principal
Dedicated and hard-working teachers
Families and students who contribute to the positive school climate
Voluntary grade level meetings

Recommendations for Ella Risk Elementary School

Communicate the need for a curriculum for all subject areas and participate in the development of one.

Continue to use and support effective and innovative programs.

Continue to support and celebrate all stakeholders who work to improve Ella Risk.

Teach all students in the least restrictive environment.

Provide professional development in all subject areas to teachers of special populations.

Increase efforts to involve parents in Ella Risk by establishing a parent/teacher group.

Provide more frequent communication to inform parents of their children's progress, as well as how to help them help their children with their homework.

Provide additional after school programs for students.

Increase professional development opportunities for teachers during and after the school day.

Provide additional professional development to enable all teachers to differentiate their instruction to challenge all learners.

Recommendations for Central Falls School Department

Develop a curriculum for all subject areas.

Develop and implement a plan to ensure that all students are educated in the least restrictive environments with their grade level peers.

Develop a strategic plan to support Ella Risk in its efforts to increase parental involvement, and provide proactive, systematic and ongoing professional development.

Provide additional funding for parent requested after school programs.

Examine the use of time for the instruction of students and professional development opportunities for teachers during the school day.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO ELLA RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The teachers, principal and district administrators at Ella Risk need to continue to work together to raise student achievement. The entire school community must continue to advance its valiant effort to support its students by always welcoming new and more effective instructional methods and programs.

To help each child attain the maximum education at Ella Risk, all teachers need to examine each child's current level of functioning and do everything in their power to push that child forward as far as he or she can go. The ongoing dedication of the teachers at Ella Risk School will help to continue this progress. Insist that you receive the professional development and support you need to help your students reach their potential.

We encourage administrators, teachers and parents to collaborate, as a school community, to pursue all avenues available and to jump over all hurdles placed in their way to raise the expectations and achievement for every child. The school needs to put students at the forefront of every decision made about the programs and professional development offered at this school.

Take the conclusions, commendations and recommendations contained in this report and lay them side-by-side to begin the process of determining the next steps your school needs to take. This will aid you in your goal to provide all children with a challenging learning environment. With true instructional leaders, dedicated teachers, a caring staff and supportive parents, you are poised to become a high performing elementary school. Keep up your momentum, and recognize that improvement is a never-ending journey. We wish you the best in this work.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Ella Risk Elementary School

December 10, 2004

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs*, 1st edition.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of two portions of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
January 7, 2005

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Ella Risk Elementary School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Ella Risk Elementary School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 7 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Ella Risk Elementary School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2004 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - Professional Development at Ella Risk School binder*
 - Ella Risk School Budget 2004-2005 binder*
 - Title I Budget 2003-2005 binder*
 - Central Falls School District Mathematics Exemplars, Grade K-5, 2000-*

2002 binder

Central Falls Balanced Literacy Framework, First Edition, summer 2003 binder

Central Falls School District Narrative Writing Exemplars, Grades K-5, 2000-2002 binder

Investigations Administrator's Handbook

Achieving Literacy through Inquiry Science, July 2002 binder

School Improvement Grant 2003-2004 binder

Ella Risk School Handbook

2003 Information Works!

2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries

2003 Rhode Island Writing Assessment results

School and District Report Cards

State Assessment Results for Ella Risk Elementary School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

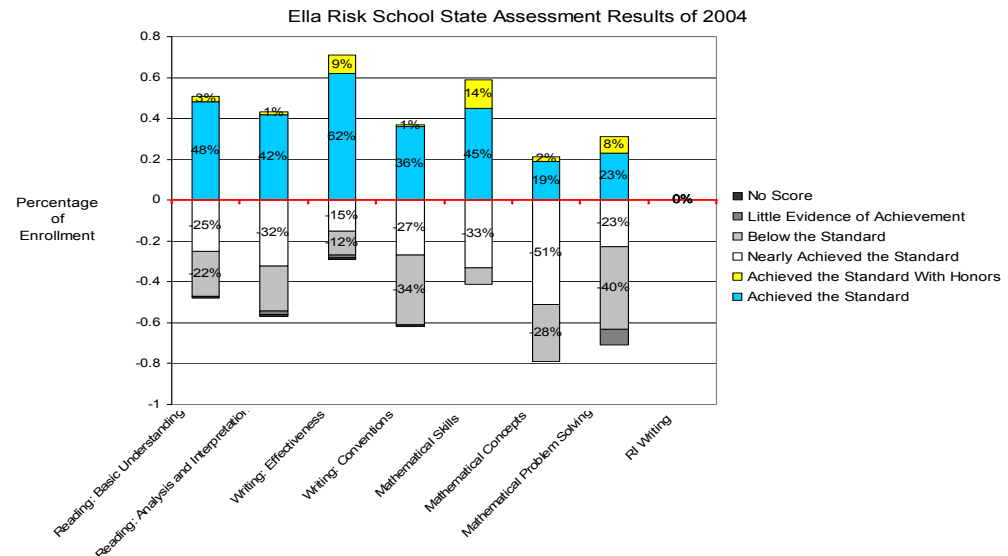
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ *against performance standards;*
- ◆ *compared to similar students in the state;*
- ◆ *across student groups within the school;*
- ◆ *and over time.*

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

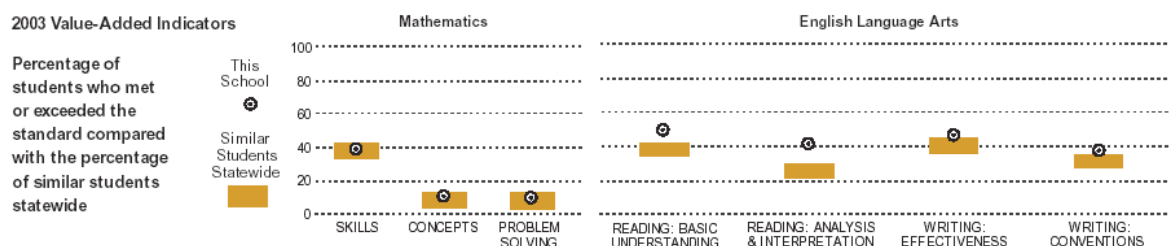
Table 1. 2003-2004 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments



RESULTS COMPARED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN THE STATE

This chart includes the performance levels of students with special education needs, students participating in ESL or bilingual programs, low socio-economic status (a composite of income level, racial background and parental education), as well as the performance of students with none of these characteristics. Taking all these characteristics into account, the graph displays the overall performance of students in this school compared to a group of students from across the state whose characteristics match this school's students.

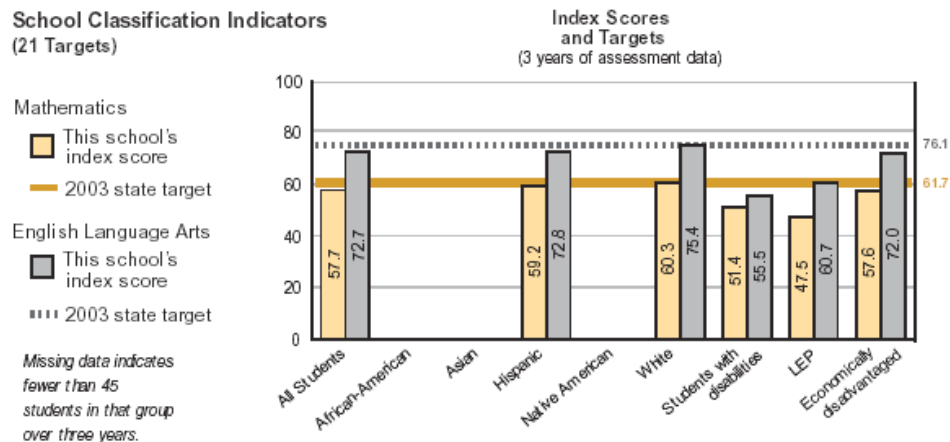
Table 2. 2002-2003 Student Results in Comparison to Similar Students Statewide



RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

An important way to display student results is across different groups of students who are in the school. This display shows targets and index scores and reflects the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows groups with 45 or more students across three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gaps.

Table 3. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups



Index scores range from 0 to 100. They are based on the performance levels of all students in both English language arts and mathematics, for all subtests, over three years. For further detail, see the 2003 School Reports Cards at www.ridoe.net.

REPORT CARD FOR ELLA RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This Report Card show the performance of Ella Risk Elementary School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Ella Risk Elementary School as a School in Need of Improvement/Making Progress.

Table 4. Report Card for Ella Risk Elementary School

Index Proficiency Score, 2002-04	English Language Arts Target score: 76.1				MATHEMATICS Target score: 61.7			
	this School	Target Met?	this District	thE State	this School	Target Met?	this District	thE State
All Students	76.2	YES	76.6	86.1	65.8	YES	65.7	77.5
African Americans	*	YES	78.4	77.8	*	YES	64.6	65.9
Asian	*	YES	*	84.5	*	YES	*	77.1
Hispanic	77.1	YES	74.3	75.8	66.6	YES	65.3	65.8
Native Americans	*	YES	*	83.9	*	YES	*	73
White	77.2	YES	79.6	88.5	67.5	YES	68.9	82
Students with Disabilities	65.7	YES†	61.2	69.5	65	YES	57	66.4
Students with Limited English Proficiency	62.8	YES†	63.3	68.9	56.1	YES†	56.3	61
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	76.1	YES	75	77.8	65.6	YES	65.4	68.4

PERCENT of students tested, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	this school	target met?	THIS DISTRICT	the state
English Language Arts	98.7	YES	99	99.1
Mathematics	99	YES	99	99.4

Attendance Rate	Target: 90%			
	this school	target met?	THIS DISTRICT	the state
	94.2	YES	94.1	94.8

☐ This school is classified as: High Performing and Sustaining

Information Works! data for Ella Risk Elementary School is available at
<http://www.rido.net>.

THE ELLA RISK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Lora Kosten
Principal
School Improvement Team Chair

Susana Arenas
Home School Liaison

Marie Bernier
Grade 5 Teacher

Lorraine Corriveau
Parent

Martha Fajardo
Parent

Nancy Gray
Grade 4 Teacher

Blanca Londono
Parent

Gabriela Nicola
Parent

Jackie Parra
Parent

Alberta Procaccini
School Nurse

Maria Rocha
Parent

Norma Videla
Parent

Connie White
Title I Teacher

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

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